

Integrated Workplace

Integrated Workplace Pilot Leads the Way at GSA!

By Rob Obenreder, GSA Office of Real Property

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Can a better workspace reduce long-term operational costs and minimize waste?

Would you believe federal money can be better leveraged to not only improve workspace aesthetics, but also the performance of the space and the productivity of those using it? Did you know the federal government spends millions of dollars each year providing workspace for its employees, often using 19th century methods and solutions to support 21st century knowledge work?

To answer these questions and test these ideas, we, GSA's Office of

Office sets precedent for renovation of office space in historic 1917 building with Integrated Workplace process.

Real Property, renovated our offices using Integrated Workplace (IW) principles, which were published in the report "The Integrated Workplace: A Comprehensive Approach to Developing Workspace."

Design Challenges: The old workspace for the Office of Real Property consisted of systems and freestanding furniture of various vintages and sources, awkwardly arranged in poorly lit, confined

spaces. "Amenities" included a poorly located and confusing executive suite and staff administrative area at the mid-point of a noisy public corridor, and a large conference room with a library whose use was restricted by the conference room schedule. The office space was gloomy at best, with inflexible, inequitable workstations and limited opportunities for staff interaction.

As is typical in a small project like this, the limited scope and budget precluded using extensive consultant help. A workplace change professional was brought in at the beginning to conduct a workshop that helped define work processes, workplace strategies, and office space needs. We then held a design charrette with in-house staff. It could be said that, in large part, we the tenants designed our space, overcoming many of the typical obstacles and attitudes all offices would face.

In-house architects and designers provided design and project management expertise and the building support staff carried out furniture procurement and much of the construction.

The Workplace Design - From Vision to Reality through Dialogue: The staff and

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Office of Real Property located in historic GSA Headquarters Building

The Integrated Workplace allows an organization to use the workplace as a strategic tool to accomplish its mission and improve employee performance. It provides a context for examining needs and resources to be translated into appropriate work strategies and space solutions. It supports a sustainable approach to federal facilities by focusing on solutions that provide more healthy, productive, and flexible workspace and work strategies that help attract and retain valued staff, simplify reorganization and space reconfiguration, and reduce downtime and waste.

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management defined our workplace needs. They wanted a workplace that "fosters innovation and communication, provides a healthy and satisfying environment, and supports high-quality work."

Using a series of two-bay-wide suites (about 560 s.f.) that accommodate 4-5 people in open workstations surrounding a common area, the final space configuration is more in keeping with the original building layout of private offices along a public corridor. This arrangement moved the secondary internal circulation of the old open-plan office back into the original corridors, picking up needed usable space and creating opportunities for staff interaction. The result is a more intimate, collegial atmosphere than the previous open-plan "cubicle farm," so justly maligned in recent years.

Existing space was reconfigured to make better use of it. As a result, wasted space was recaptured to create 3 small meeting rooms and a community room in the same rentable area. In total, over 900

square feet (10% of the total space) has been recaptured.

Just the Facts: The Office of Real Property is housed in 852 rentable square meters (9,167 square feet) on the sixth and seventh floors of the

"Our new innovative workspace facilitates teamwork and interaction among GSA Real Property Policy Division associates."

**Stanley Langfeld,
Real Property Policy Division Director.**

historic, 85-year-old General Services Building in Washington, DC. The newly renovated space, occupied in June 2002, provides office and support space for a total staff of 46 in 42 workstations. The utilization rate is 18.5 rentable square meters (199 square feet) per person, including joint use and conference spaces. Average workstation size is 7.2 square meters (78 square feet).

A More Collaborative Process: Through team meetings, staff workshops, focus groups, surveys, and interviews, we defined written goals for our new workplace. The

three most important issues were: privacy and noise, more user adaptability, and improved day-lighting and temperature control. The staff also identified ergonomics, team meeting space, and storage as priorities. Management also wanted increased opportunities for staff interaction, team collaboration and telework support.

Specific Design Solutions:

More privacy/less noise: Division of the larger, open spaces into smaller 5-person "suites" maximizes the distance between workers, helping to reduce noise and distractions.

User adaptability and mobility: All furniture and space screens are easily moveable. (graphics---pic of typical workstation)

More daylight: We took advantage of

the narrow depth of the suites to provide more natural light in the spaces.

Temperature control: Existing window air conditioners were located more uniformly in the spaces. Ceiling fans in each office improved air circulation.

Storage: Workstation storage includes towers, file pedestals, and bookshelves, all on wheels for easy mobility; long-term file area located on the next floor.

Ergonomics: Ergonomic task chairs; new adjustable keyboard trays; task lighting provides increased

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illumination at the desktop.

More collaboration/teaming: All staff are now located in contiguous space; small meeting area in each suite; community room; three small meeting rooms.

Sustainable features: "Green" materials and practices used in the project, from sorting and recycling of paper during pre-construction moves to recycled content in all furniture, fabrics, carpet, and other flooring.

Flexibility features: Occupants have

Project Cost: The cost of providing flexible space using Integrated Workplace strategies was comparable to that of a conventionally planned space, even with some increased planning costs. We believe that this approach resulted in fewer construction changes. Fit-up costs can be tailored to meet any reasonable budget. Total "move-in" cost for this space, including design fees, space renovations and furniture, was \$49 per rentable square foot, or \$10,833 per person.

"The MP space redesign was delivered on time, within budget, and the result is an environment that is a dramatic improvement over the way we used to work."

Stanley Kaczmarczyk, Innovative Workplaces Division Director.

the complete ability to personalize their workstation configuration.

Alternative workplace strategies: Includes telework, telework centers, and desk sharing.

Performance Measurement: A survey will be conducted to poll the users on workplace performance. This information will inform future workplace changes. The GSA-wide



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Gallup Q-12 survey will also be used to assess general workplace satisfaction.

Conclusion: The Office of Real Property Integrated Workplace demonstrates that a greatly improved work environment can be created on a limited budget. Our new workspace provides completely mobile workstations that have already proved their worth. Each occupant has made changes to the workstation to better suit how he or she works. Workstations are more equitable, with each person getting the same size space and access to daylight. The new community room, carved out of old circulation space, serves as the heart of the office. Meeting areas support more collaborative and intense individual work.

All in all, life today is better in the Office of Real Property (MP) thanks to a responsive workplace design that will continue to be adapted and improved, meeting today's needs and tomorrow's challenges. We are living the Integrated Workplace, and are better for it. For more information on IW and the pilot, contact Rob Obenreder at 202-208-1824. ■

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